



Protecting children against online violence – Reflections from the EU Kids Online and the Net Children Go Mobile projects

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Online opportunities and risks

- New technologies offer a myriad of opportunities:

- fun
- socialization
- information
- learning
- participation
- ...



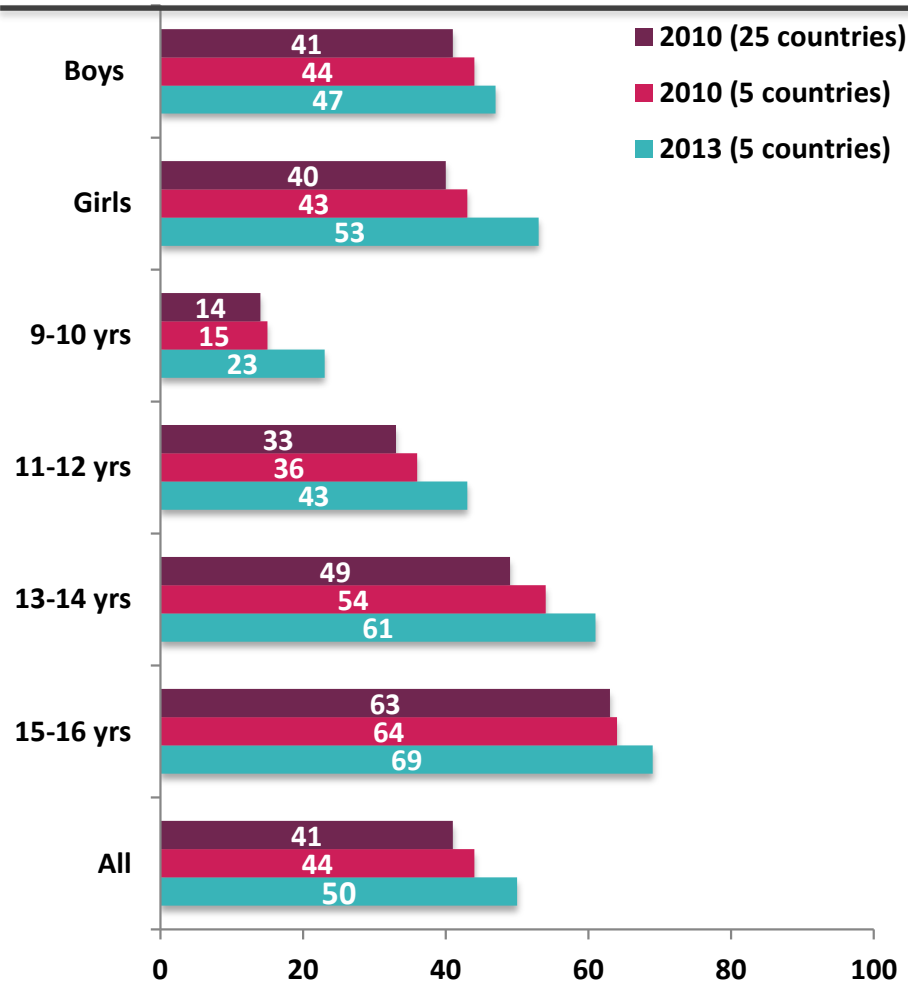
- However, they also create new opportunities for new forms of risks and sometimes also harm

With which types of online risks are children confronted with?

	Content Child as receiver (of mass productions)	Contact Child as participant (adult-initiated activity)	Conduct Child as actor (perpetrator / victim)
Aggressive	Violent / gory content	Harassment, stalking	Bullying, hostile peer activity
Sexual	Pornographic content	'Grooming', sexual abuse or exploitation	Sexually harassment, 'sexting'
Values	Racist / hateful content	Ideological persuasion	Potentially harmful user-generated content
Commercial	Embedded marketing	Personal data misuse	Gambling, copyright infringement



2010 vs. 2013: Slight increase in % of children who encountered online risks

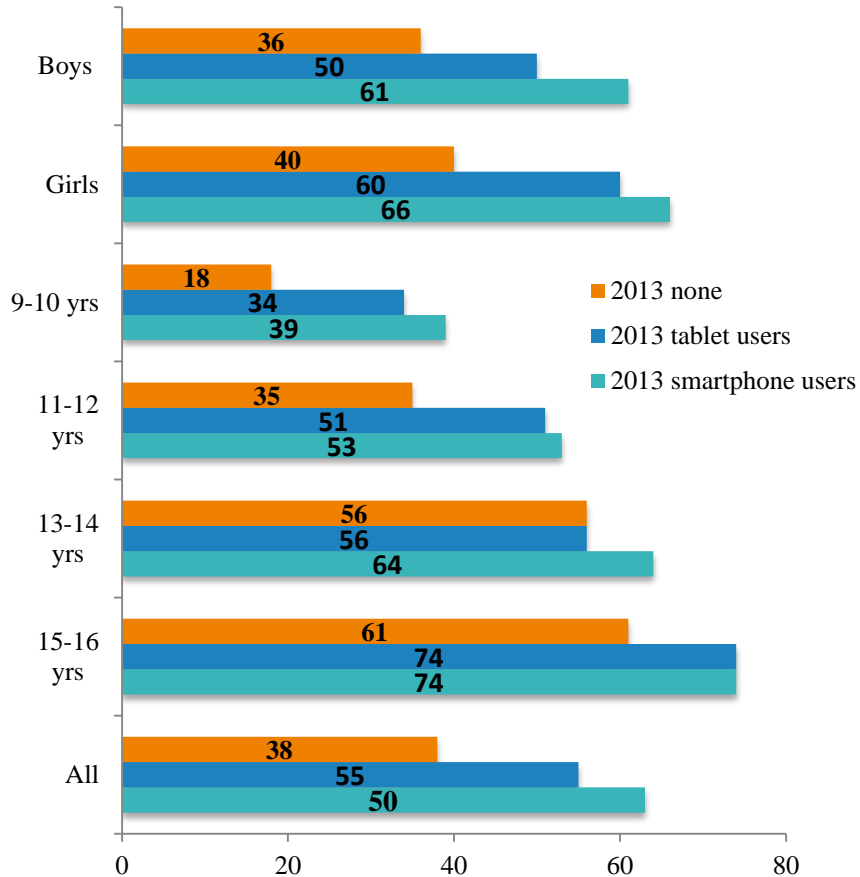


What has changed since 2010?

- **Rise in cyberbullying**, esp. for girls, but offline bullying is still greater
- **Rise in meeting strangers (offline)**
- **Rise in negative UGC**
- **Slight rise in porn**
- **Sexting remains the same**
- **Rise in % who self-report harmful experiences**, especially girls & teens



Tablet and smart phone users more likely to encounter one or more risks



Lots of concerns, many relate to violence

What bothers kids your age?



Fighting. People being cruel to animals and hitting them. (Girl, 11)

Horrid games. Killing each other. Batting games. Zombie. (Boy, 10)

Dead bodies, blood, sexual images/videos. Dying people. (Girl, 13)

Porn. Websites showing people doing suicide. (Boy, 12)

Porn websites. Information on how to be anorexic, kill yourself, get drugs. (Girl, 15)

Hate groups on Facebook being created about them. (Boy, 12)

Death by beating. Inappropriate images, sexual images. (Girl, 15)

Graphic images like gore or pornography. (Boy, 14)

Winding people up. Cyber bullying. Threatening. (Boy, 13)

Bullying, racism, fighting, weird voice clips, too many webcam requests!! (Girl, 14)

Freddie Kruger. Scary films. Facebook. YouTube. (Girl, 9)

YouTube. Terrible videos. Terrible images. (Boy, 13)



Sexual risks

- **Sexual risks** – that is seeing sexual images or receiving sexual messages online – are commonly encountered, but are **experienced as harmful by few of the children**

“I found them in the bathroom watching pornographic websites, on my laptop”
(Mother of a 13-year old boy)



Violent material

- Violent material receives less public attention than sexual material, but many children are particularly concerned about violent, aggressive or gory online content
 - images and descriptions associated with war and other atrocities
 - domestic abuse and violence
 - cruelty to animals
 - material that promotes racial and religious hatred, homophobia or misogyny



User Generated Content (UGC)

- A large amount of easily accessible material, usually user generated content (UGC) that addresses and, tacitly or explicitly, encourages harmful behaviour among children and adolescents:
 - websites and blogs that discuss suicide (including the efficacy of different methods)
 - eating disorders (“pro-ana” and “pro-mia” sites)
 - self-harm (especially “cutting”) and drug use



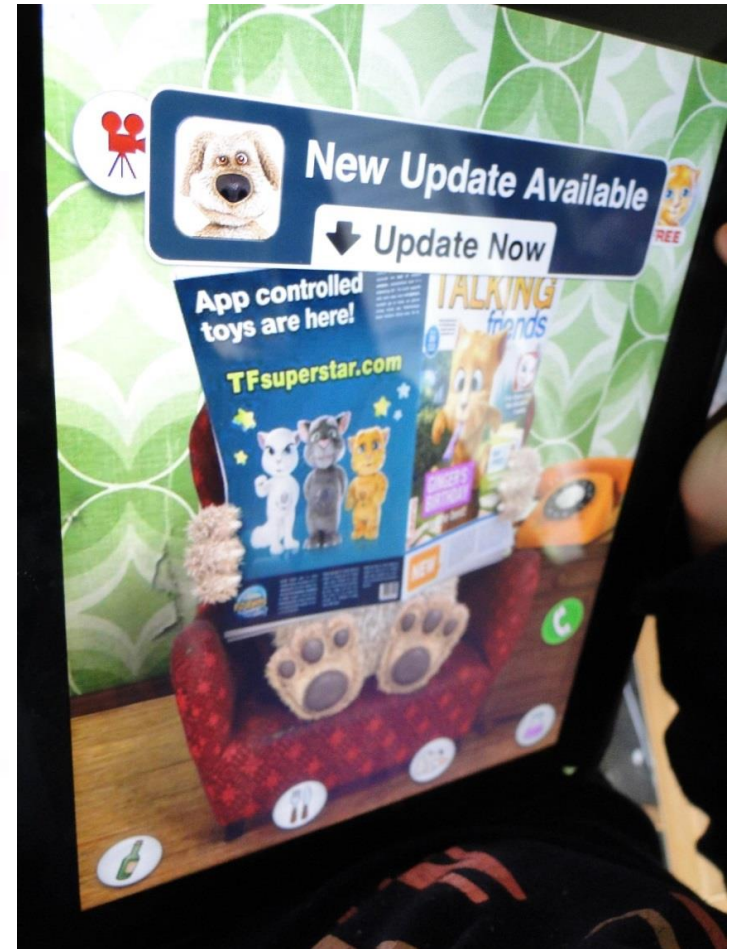
Commercial risks

Sponsored  See all

AfvalLEN (SCHOKKEND)



Vergeet de sportschool, lees dit artikel en je streefgewicht is dichterbij dan je denkt!



The older the safer?

- As regards safety skills we observe consistent variations by **age** and partly by **gender**:
 - **Boys** generally claim more safety skills than girls
 - **Teenagers** claim more than double the skills reported by younger children
 - Younger children who are **tablet users** claim considerably more safety skills related to SNS



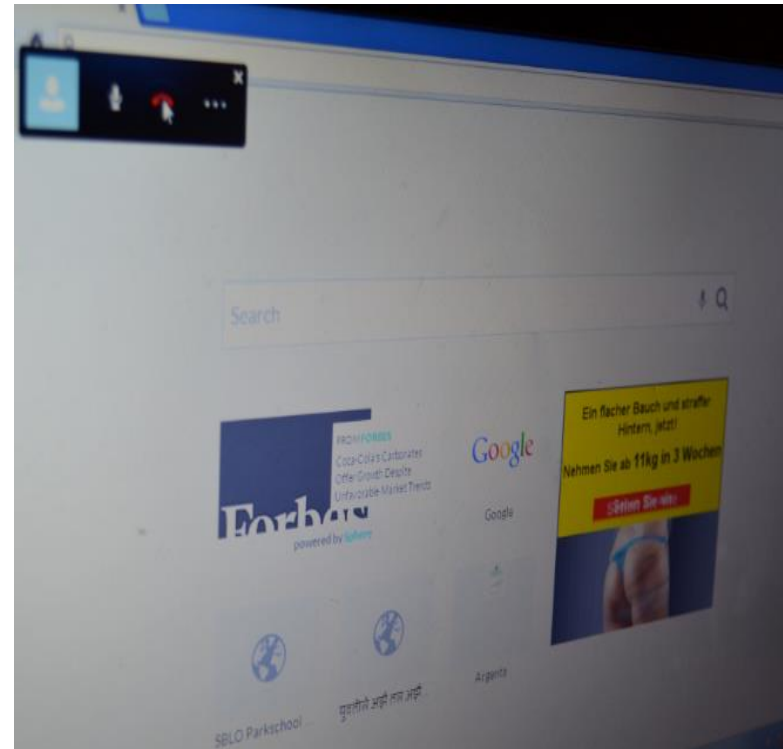
Perceptions of risks: 6-year olds` views

- Some awareness of risks, esp. fear of breaking technology or commercial and “technical” risks:
 - “ Sometimes big people want to *sell* you things”
 - “You can` t see the code I` m typing in [...] if you do, you can *steal money* from us”
 - “I can` t click there `cause *something bad* can happen to the tablet”
 - “Sometimes big people post *silly videos* online”
 - “I don` t like it when boys play games where they *shoot people dead*”
- Some risks seem “invisible”



To what extent are children harmed by online risks?

- Not all risks result in harm and not all children are affected by risks in the same way
- Opportunities and risks go hand in hand:..
 - The more online activities children engage in, the more children are skilled and self-confident (also to deal with online risks) and vice versa.



Conclusions

- **Media literacy and education** are essential to mitigate online risks, but also to fully take advantage of the opportunities new ICT offer
 - Start from an early age => prevention!
- Special attention for **vulnerable groups** is needed
 - children from certain minority groups, and children with disabilities, may be more likely to be bullied, harassed or exploited online
 - EU Kids online concluded that **online and offline vulnerability** are interrelated
 - Double jeopardy effect: children with more psychological problems suffer more from online as well as offline risks



Recommendations

- **Raise awareness** of online risks among children and their parents and caregivers
- Introduce appropriate **legislation** & ensuring their effective implementation
- **Train** law enforcement officials, teachers and other professionals working with children
- Support **recovery** for children who have been exposed to abuse and exploitation
 - Evaluate the potential positive impact of the use of online technologies to support helplines and other social or counseling services.
- **Evidence-based** research
- Incentivise the **private sector** to take measures to enhance children's online safety



Finding the right balance...



Thanks!



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